

Message Text

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44

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 EUR-25 ISO-00 AGR-20 CEA-02 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 FRB-02 H-03 INR-10 INT-08 L-03 LAB-06

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 AID-20 CIEP-02 SS-20

STR-08 TAR-02 TRSE-00 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 FEA-02

OMB-01 SWF-02 DRC-01 /196 W
----- 038045

R 201848Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6188
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USEC BRUSSELS 015

UNCLAS PORT OF SPAIN 664

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: EARG ETRD XL TD US

SUBJECT: SUGAR: GOTT CANNOT MEET ITS EXPORT COMMITMENTS

REF: POS 463

1. MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE ERROL MAHABIR ANNOUNCED MARCH 18 THAT TRINIDAD WOULD MAKE THIS YEAR'S FIRST EXPORT SHIPMENT OF SUGAR (12,000 LONG TONS TO THE U.K.) DURING CURRENT WEEK. SPEAKING TO THE PRESS, MAHABIR SAID THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT TRINIDAD'S SUGAR PRODUCTION TO EXCEED 150,000 LONG TONS THIS YEAR, OF WHICH 42,000 LONG TONS WILL GO TO DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, AND 4,000 LONG TONS TO THE CARIFTA MARKET (DOWN FROM THE USUAL 12,000 LONG TONS). THE SMALL AMOUNT REMAINING, MAHABIR SAID, MEANS THAT "TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MEET ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS THIS YEAR GIVEN THE PRESENT CONDIDTIONS IN SUGAR."

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2. MAHABIR ALSO ANNOUNCED INCREASES OF ABOUT 15 PERCENT IN THE CONTROLLED RETAIL PRICE OF VARIOUS GRADES OF SUGAR SOLD FOR DOMESTIC AND INDUSTRIAL USE IN TRINIDAD. THESE PRICE INCREASES, HE SAID, ARE CONSONANT WITH WORLD BANK LOAN CONDITIONS WHICH REQUIRE INCREASES IN DOMESTIC PRICES IN PROPORTION TO INCREASED PRICES FOR SUGAR EXPORT SALES. THE MINISTER ALSO NOTED THAT THE COUNTRY'S PRODUCTION OF REFINED SUGAR WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO MEET DOMESTIC NEEDS THIS YEAR, AND SAID THAT TRINIDAD WILL HAVE TO IMPORT ABOUT 10,000 LONG TONS. HE INDICATED THAT THE GOTT IS SEARCHING FOR A SOURCE OF SUPPLY CHEAPER THAN ITS USUAL CANADIAN SUPPLIERS.

3. COMMENT: MAHABIR'S STATEMENT IS ANOTHER STEP IN THE GOTT'S CAMPAIGN TO GET THE TRINIDAD SUGAR INDUSTRY FUNCTIONING AGAIN, SINCE NORMAL CUTTING AND REFINING LEVELS HAVE NOT BEEN ATTAINED DUE TO SEVERE LABOR PROBLEMS. THE GOTT'S EXPORT COMMITMENT, AS SUCH, IS TO THE WEST INDIES SUGAR ASSOCIATION (WISA)--NOT DIRECTLY WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS -- AND WISA DOUBTLESS HAS TAKEN THE LIKELY TRINIDADIAN SHORT-FALL INTO CONSIDERATION. THE ANNOUNCED DOMESTIC PRICE INCREASES MAY PROVE HIGHLY UNPOPULAR, SINCE THEY ARE BOUND TO LEAD TO INCREASES IN THE PRICES OF SOFT DRINKS, BAKERY GOODS, ETC.
MILLER

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